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ABSTRACT

The various roles that a teacher enacts are examined from four perspectives in this paper. Part one: "The Curriculum Text" presents a series of observations of classroom activity, and part two: "A Student Perspective" includes a collection of interviews with students who had been previously observed. The teacher's tape-recorded thoughts are explained in part three: "Inside the Teacher's Mind," while part four: "The Science and the Art" discusses ten identifiable aspects of a teacher's repertoire: (1) indweller/imaginer/psychologist; (2) experimenter/theoretician/scientist; (3) technician/designer; (4) knower/believer; (5) controller/shaper/sculptor; (6) coach/demonstrator/teacher; (7) metaphysicist/illuminator/commentator; (8) politician/battler; (9) provider/servant; and (10) connoisseur/reflector/critic. The paper concludes that the teacher is an artist whose art is to deploy the previously mentioned roles. (DF)

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ENGLISH TEACHING : ART AND SCIENCE

Garth Boomer

(An address to the NCTE Convention,
Detroit, November 1984)

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PART ONE : THE CURRICULUM TEXT

Mrs Bell, a teacher of ten year's experience in the one school, has begun a unit of work at Timbertown High School with her year 10 (15 year old) English class of 21. The school is in a predominantly working class area but is essentially an academic institution. The setting is a second floor semi-enclosed classroom in a former open space section of the school built to accommodate eight such classes. Noise drifts in around partitions and through concertina dividers from classes next door. We cannot take in everything and everyone and so we concentrate on Tammy, a vivacious Greek-Australian, Guiseppe known as Joseph, of Italian descent, the infinitely self-effacing Au Kim, newly arrived from Vietnam, and Brenton, the ocker Australian who carries a cricket bat with him everywhere like a wand to ward off evil, occasionally using it as a mock machine gun on his enemies. Progressively over a two month period we will get to know each member of the class, as, like a negative becoming positive in developing fluid they emerge and are particularized in our awareness. They have been with the teacher for only five weeks. They are to read the Ruth Park novel, Playing Beatie Bow, the story of a present day Sydney girl Abigail, who is taken back one hundred years in time to live with her ancestors in the early settlement region of Sydney rocks. The experience helps her to understand her confused adolescence and to come to terms with her parents' separation.

Early in the unit of work we find Mrs Bell reading the third chapter, pausing to show pictures from a book on colonial Sydney. After some reading she stops to negotiate with the class about how the rest of the book is to be read. Tammy suggests they read in groups, not friendship groups but groups that will be "best for you". Homework is to find quotations in the early chapters which relate to Abigail's "inner conflict".

The next lesson is two days on. The entry to the class is ragged and noisy. Mrs Bell pauses patiently for attention. Joseph is not eager to begin. When Mrs Bell announces that she is pregnant, Brenton raises a laugh by asking "How far gone?"

They all edge forward to clarify the details of when she will be leaving. Mrs Bell lets them know exactly when she will take leave (five months hence).

Groups are given contract sheets to fill in, indicating to the teacher how they intend to carry out the reading assignment and what time line they will use. Brenton repeatedly seeks teacher attention as Mrs Bell circulates answering questions of clarification about the contract and the task. Eventually they begin to read, some silently, some in groups. Brenton can be overheard telling Joseph about "midwives":

"In olden days they had grannies who helped people have kids"

AuKim and LaiAnh read alone with immense concentration, and Tammy chatters volubly postponing the task.

Later in the lesson, as requested by Mrs Bell, they negotiate themselves into new friendship or "convenience" groups and each group receives a worksheet which asks them to establish what is meant by "self-awareness", "inner conflict" and "in search of inner self" in relation to the novel. It is suggested that they brainstorm personal examples and then report to the class. After this they are each to prepare a reading/performance or presentation of a poem which reveals one of these themes, explaining how it relates to the novel. The instruction reads:

"Decide how the group will go about this.
In what way can the group support each other?
How will you present the poems and your reactions?
Decide on group and individual tasks."

Brenton wants to work individually, but seeing all the others in groups, he approaches two very conscientious workers, Cain and Phillip, who quite patently do not want him. Reluctantly, however, they grant him entry.

Mrs Bell is busy explaining "inner conflict", clarifying time lines and answering "commissions" from students, especially from the irrepressible Brenton who sends out frequent mock radio messages

"Calling Mrs Bell, calling Mrs Bell ...."

Eavesdropping on Joseph's group, we discover them talking about shoplifting and smoking, while from another group of girls we overhear: "Sodium's Na". The previous lesson in science has carried over. Glen companionably wanders across to tell Tammy's group to be quiet and stays to yarn. Joseph yawns, takes out his watch, shakes it and announces that it has had a cardiac arrest.

When it comes to silent or group reading time, Brenton paces the room like a caged tiger asserting that he has finished. Mrs Bell, with great patience, suggests a range of extension novels which she has brought along for this very purpose, and causing our eyebrows to lift slightly, Brenton eventually settles down ostentatiously with Dr Zhivago.

After six pages Brenton re-enters a group and announces that Abigail is a "schizophrenic antidisestablishmentarian".

We note, by the way, that each lesson begins with very explicit recapitulation by Mrs Bell about what has happened, along with reminders about where the work is heading and how it is to be organized.

After the weekend, the teacher brings in a good range of poetry anthologies and talks with the whole class about how to use the library to find more poetry. Before long, after leafing through the anthologies most of them containing poems by children of about their own age, they begin to read pieces to each other. "Listen to this one", "I've found one".

Joseph's group discusses cricket until Glen interrupts. He has found a poem about a drag race between rival gangs. Joseph laughs. Glen suggests a group poem about "The Street Machine" and they begin tossing in lines. The effort falters; Chris announces that he's going to write about "The Lifestyle of a Rice Bubble", while Michael and Glen take out a motor magazine and look at the pictures. Eventually, they pause to hear Chris's poem. Mrs Bell approaches and they all give the impression of serious work. Without destroying the rice bubble initiative, she reminds them of the need to find poems about inner conflict. She directs them back to the task sheet. She

suggests that they might find a whole range of ways to present their work dramatically.

A couple of lessons on, Mrs Bell takes two groups who seem to be making little headway and suggests that she provides a model of how to analyse a poem and find aspects of its themes. "What do you think?" she asks and, with little enthusiasm it seems, they agree. She reads the poem "At Sixteen" and they jot down "what the poem is about" except for Joseph who can't find his paper.

While other groups argue and negotiate about how to perform their poems, Mrs Bell is still at work on her modelling exercise. Now she is at the point of reading them her own piece on "At Sixteen" showing them how she interweaves quotation and commentary.

At another table Brenton and his two conscientious colleagues are preparing a poster, the centre of which is a huge brain around which they attach poems on inner conflict. Brenton announces that this was his idea. The other two repudiate the claim.

A joint decision that their work will be video taped galvanizes formerly tardy groups. It takes three more lessons to complete the performances which contain some real surprises. Brenton, for instance, performs passionately and well the role of a drug addict and wins acclaim from those who usually find him a pain. The camera is forgotten. The Vietnamese girls, still shy, get through their parts, while Joseph and Glen take the acting award with a fine piece on racial discrimination. Each performance is followed by constructive evaluation from Mrs Bell and the class.

Two events serve as the end points. In one lesson the whole class reflects on what they have learnt and a couple of weeks later they sit rapt and fascinated watching the video replay of their achievements.

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PART TWO : A STUDENT PERSPECTIVE

Throughout the enactment of this particular English curriculum text, we have had the privilege of talking at the end of each lesson to Tammy, AuKim and Joseph about what happened, what they thought of what happened, and what they thought might happen next.

In the early interviews with the students we note an almost total lack of empathy with the teacher as teacher. They do not perceive that what she is doing is premeditated and constantly re-worked in the light of their response to her planning. When asked to predict what Mrs Bell will do next they are at first working simply on their general knowledge of "what English teachers do".

"She's getting us to underline things, so probably at the end she'll get us to write that up and then write an essay on it", says Tammy.

While they begin with a very poor understanding of why they are doing what they are doing, despite Mrs Bell's persistent and patient re-iteration at the beginning of each lesson and during lessons, they are aware that English this year is different:

"We are going deeper into things this year", says Joseph.

Some way into the unit such self-consciousness emerges in the interviews. Tammy, reflecting upon a group work session, shows a grasp of some things we might wish more teachers to appreciate:

"It was good. If we didn't understand, we'd share it around the group. When we got really stuck, we called her over and figured it out. Once you're in groups, you don't feel scared about whether it's right or wrong, you can just say it."

All of them do not perceive that they have worked.

"We didn't do too much work. Writing work. It was all reading and getting into groups. Talking. We didn't get much work done."

Clearly work is acquainted with writing.

While they are inarticulate about Mrs Bell's and their own intentions early in the unit, towards the end they are highly articulate, expansive and detailed in their prediction about what is going to happen. Indeed their remarks take on very similar qualities to the monologue planning texts of Mrs Bell herself. They become, over time, co-planners of the curriculum.

"Tuesday we're probably going to go back into our reading groups - a lesson of that. Wednesday we don't have English. Thursday we've got a double lesson, so I think one lesson we're going to be performing it and it will probably run into the next lesson and then Friday - the next two lessons we'll probably rehearse - and perform it again. And the week after that, earlier than expected, we'll probably show the play."

They also show themselves to be aware of each other in more than superficial ways.

"How do you explain Brenton" the interviewer says.

"He wants attention" says Tammy

"Mm", says Joseph

"He's got problems" says Tammy. "You know, home and all that. Personal problems. Doesn't get enough love and attention at home."

They do much better empathizing with Brenton than they do with Mrs Bell. Despite her openness about herself and her own experience in class discussions, an occlusion operates. She is a teacher.

"I don't think teachers worry about many things" says Tammy.

They find it almost impossible to talk about what she might have felt or thought about a lesson.

"But don't you try to read your teacher's mind" says the interviewer.

"Only when there's a test coming up", says Joseph.

When it is all over they interestingly contradict themselves. They have not worked and yet they say they have learnt "bulk about poems", gained confidence which will help them get a job, survived the test of performing to their peers ("It will be much easier next time") and furthermore they understand that they have been allowed to work through some of the darker areas of adolescence.

"It helps you to get feelings out of your head."

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PART THREE : INSIDE THE TEACHER'S MIND

We have seen the unfolding drama. We have heard the spectator/participant comments of some students. Now we are allowed the unique experience of eavesdropping on the mind of the teacher in her initial composing, during the enactment of the curriculum unit and in reflection on the work done. She has tried to capture the life of her mind by speaking a running commentary monologue of her thoughts into a hand-held tape recorder. In the essentially privatized world of education, educational writers have been prone to stigmatize and stereotype teachers, reducing them to types and styles; speculating, often patronizingly, about intentions and designs. But we are to come close to a direct window on the mind of the practitioner at work. We who have been teachers, too, recognize it as authentic. This archaeological exercise reminds us of treasures we tend to bury and forget; things we know but do not speak of when we write about the art and science of our own teaching; perhaps so taken-for-granted that we de-value them.

In the incubating stages Mrs Bell loosely construes the unit. Her preference is to use the novel The Outsiders by Ruth Park because "it works well with year 10s".

She wants to set up group collaboration on writing and she is keen to introduce extension reading. She is not happy yet with their contribution to class discussion. She hopes that in groups she can structure things so that they feel comfortable to exchange ideas.

Following the flow sometime later, we are reminded that schools are complex contexts:
"Well, The Outsiders is not available. In fact, I'm sixth on the list in application for it. Its popularity is spreading alike with teachers and students. Romeo and Juliet looks as though it couldn't be arranged in time, so Playing Beatie Bow it is."

She begins to spark ideas off herself.
"I'd like some to take a literary criticism type approach ... I think some get enjoyment out of using their skills as writers, their skills of honing down their thoughts. I can certainly remember at year 10 level myself starting to feel that come together in the pure enjoyment of it. ... but it also lends itself really well to an exploration of the historical aspects of the novel and the idea of time travel which is an element of this story and I think we could look into that particularly because of its Australian setting, although it wouldn't have to be confined to Australia... "

From this consideration she moves on to think about stream of consciousness writing in journals and this leads her to the idea which from our vantage point we know finally takes the central ground:
"I think poetry is another area. I think I'd do that before we get into writing at the end of the novel. Poetry that takes up one of the themes of the book, of growing personal awareness of the inner conflict that the girl is going though ... It's an area that year 10s are into themselves..... Last year we started a poem called <u>At Sixteen</u> and there was lots of response to that poem .... and then I invited them to find poems that they thought expressed conflict .... I also suggested that they might like to write poems .... That was really good... So I would really like to capture some of that again this year. The poetry would be something that we would do. Yes. .. that is something I will do for sure."

Then she plunges deep into the content of the novel exploring its themes and symbols, testing the limits of its territory and its relevance to the students.

She dwells for some time on the problems of the Vietnamese students who will need extra help.

We leave her first monologue at the point where she will now write up the curriculum unit, along with some structures for them to work within...
"a framework for them to choose their own sorts of work and set their own questions...."

As the work begins we listen to her contemplating some of the surprise turns in the plot:
"There was a group who opted to read with me who were not weak students who might be looking for help and guidance. In fact, those chose not to work with me. Those who did are quite confident readers who said they enjoyed discussing their reading and reflecting on the novel as they went along...."

She is critical of her ambiguous or unclear wording on the task sheets and acknowledges the confusion "although they came up with some good ideas in groups".

Within the commentary on the content and process of the lessons, are embedded observations on the students:

"Brenton went and sat himself with Cain and Phillip much to their displeasure but he stood his ground."

"Kim and Anh showed their usual reluctance to join a group. I don't know whether it's because they don't want to join a group or because of their shyness; they think perhaps they're not welcome. And I suggested to them that Tammy and Elvira's group would make them welcome having asked them if it was OK with them. They're very friendly and Kim and Anh came over quietly. But I was impressed by the way the other girls made them welcome and they seemed to settle in quite well there...."

Since Brenton has already forced us to attend to him, it is worth following what Mrs Bell thinks about him:
"I put some pressure on him early in the piece of work, an unfinished piece ... and his comment to me was:

'Oh, what are you bothering for; nobody else does' ... I think Brenton interrupts and does his usual thing with the cricket bat ... to make his presence felt. That's his way of making contact. It doesn't particularly worry me."

Quite extensively she expands upon her theories of teaching the novel, particularly dwelling on the perspectives she brings as an historian. She also reflects upon the quality of student work:

"There's still not as much commitment to the work as I'd hoped ... especially from being able to work in groups. I feel it's been a bit slow this week. There's always that time factor. There's so much we could do in relation to the novel ... but I feel a bit restricted by time. This week I hope that the interest in the poetry will really get going...."

A week later she is more satisfied:

"The week finished on quite a high note ... People seemed to be really getting into the poetry. Tammy's group has quite an exciting notion of threading their poems into a play. However a couple of groups seem a bit baffled by the open-ended nature of the task."

In explaining her decision to take two groups aside for some intensive "modelling", she enters into some detailed theorizing:

"I'll be trying to show them by example, by getting them to do things I would do in coming to grips with the poem ... Obviously I'd already chosen it because I feel that it is suitable ... but later we can go back with a better awareness to their choices ... So I'm trying to show them how I would work, create a structure that they can take back and apply ... and also show them a bit of the excitement of coming to terms with a poem they at first may not have a positive reaction to... The excitement of working through until you feel you've come to grips with the poem ... And I'll actually write with them .."

Her relief and pleasure shows as she comments on what eventually happens:

"Cain and Brenton and Phillip did their performance today. I think the class was half embarrassed ... about Brenton's approach to his work, his passionate delivery ... They were obviously interested in achieving a level of finished product that Brenton usually would not pay attention to..."

"Diane's confidence in front of the camera was amazing. I heard Linda say 'How could she do it?' and I must admit I share Linda's awe .. but it was a marvellous impassioned reading..."

"Joseph's little cameo role theme of the beer drinking man watching TV, I thought was excellent and yet despite all this he doesn't want to work in English. ... But the group made him commit himself to the task and it was a real high point."

Looking back on the transcript of her incubation, she expresses satisfaction that, while the specifics changed, she achieved some of her broad intentions. With evident pleasure she recounts to herself what the class achieved, without overlooking the shortcomings:
"They worked well together, they worked effectively, they worked perceptively."

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PART FOUR : THE SCIENCE AND THE ART

In thinking about how I should present to you my ideas about the science and art of English teaching, indeed all teaching, I have had many false starts. I knew I must ground my remarks. My privileged association with Mrs Bell gave me such grounding to the point where it hurts. Again and again I have come back to my data, layer upon layer of complex incights into Mrs Bell and her work. The more I have looked, the more awestruck I have become at the immensity of her achievement and the more angry I have become at myself and many other well intentioned English educators who in the past have stood up at conferences and confidently sailed into learned analyses about English teachers and English teaching with varying degrees of meta immunity from the territory. So often I have cleverly drawn maps without experiencing the terrain. This time, I knew, I must use this forum to celebrate the essentially unmappable, ineffable composing and acting of a fine teacher. This time, I must assail the teacher reducers and teacher bashers, (often sadly you teachers yourselves) with a demonstration that would illustrate the relative bankruptcy of any one academic discipline in terms of the common wealth of teachers.

Mrs Bell is a daVinci and a Galileo. In order to practise her craft at Timbertown High School in 1984, she needs a brilliant generic promiscuity. She must mix psychology, history, literature, politics, sociology, linguistics, economics, art, science, philosophy, poetics and aesthetics with passion and dispassion, with pragmatism and vision.

Aware that I had collected riches and treasures about English teaching that I had never found before, I knew nevertheless how inadequate my portrayal of Mrs Bell to you would still be.

Mrs Bell told me how inadequate her spoken monologues were in capturing what she really did when she composed. Even as we spoke about her teaching, she kept catching herself out in half-truths or inadequate representations of what she did and how she did it. She tended to depict herself as not having a learning theory and yet, as she talked, she realized, perhaps

for the first time, the degree to which she deliberately and systematically operates on a coherent theory of teaching:

"In retrospect, I realize that I've read many things that must have influenced me and I have actually written down my views about learning. When I teach I'm not conscious of these things, but as we sit here and talk, I realize that it is all there as a kind of fuel to my teaching ...."

So now, with the proviso that Mrs Bell herself doubts her own veracity as a story teller, that I captured only a fraction of the interaction in my lesson notes, that truth is always tangential, I will try in this part of my address to analyse some of what Mrs Bell does, and in so doing I hope that, through one example, I might celebrate the Universal English Teacher. The picture I paint is one of infinite embeddedness. The teaching moment is set within the teaching sequence, set within a particular classroom of a particular school in a particular socio-political context at a particular moment of history. The participants can cause infinite variations from moment to moment, each coming from a distinct and complex setting, and each interpreting the moment differently.

I have sought appropriate analogies to capture what Mrs Bell does. I considered the circus performer keeping a range of plates spinning on a pole. Then I thought of the script writer turned drama director.

Finally, I concluded that teaching is like nothing else.

Taking Mrs Bell's teaching apart is akin to dissecting a poem but let me see if, in order to sharpen our appreciation, I can analyse just ten aspects of her repertoire, and then put her back together again.

She is:

1. <u>Indweller, Imaginer, Psychologist</u>
   Mrs Bell illustrates that one cannot teach without imagining and imagining means being able to see events unfolding in contexts as well as being able to create a version of what it might be like in someone else's

mind, particularly in the minds of learners.

The transcripts show the complex construing that goes on when a teacher incubates on a possible unit of work.

Mrs Bell conjures up last year's class and holds it alongside this year's class, balancing similarities and differences. She imagines what is possible with this group, this year, fielding in her mind how the whole class might respond while keeping a delicate hold on how different individuals might respond to the chosen novel.

She has to become a Vietnamese refugee, an unloved adolescent boy, a teenager in 1984, a poor reader and a high flier.

As a base for these imaginings it seems that she needs first to become again herself at fifteen. This is her touchstone "How did I feel about these things when I was their age?"

In order to teach Brenton and AuKim she must progressively feel with them their confusion and their pleasures. She needs to build in herself an image of their present understandings in order to know when and how to teach them. She knows that only in those parts where she shares their dreams can she profitably teach.

2. Experimenter/Theoretician/Scientist

So alienating has been Mrs Bell's undergraduate experience with THEORY that, like many of her colleagues, she does not consider herself a theoretician. THEORY tends to be for those who theorize but do not teach. Yet the transcripts reveal a tenaciously theorizing mind at work operating deliberately and concertedly on established principles and procedures. Teaching may be an inexact science but it is nonetheless a science, in the sense that it cannot operate without the setting up of predictions about likely consequences in certain contexts. Just because there are multiple variables

does not deny the need for science, the systematic pressing of present knowledge into new territory.

Let me list some of the principles and assumptions which help form Mrs Bell's science:

As Mrs Bell says, these things are so "naturalized" for her that she is most of the time not conscious that they form part of her composing and enactment "generating plant".

(a) Collaboration:
She knows that being in the company of others who are thinking aloud about how to do things and interacting with those people is a way to cognitive gain both about the "stuff" being explored and about how other people think and learn.

(b) Modelling/Demonstration:
She knows that demonstration at the point of confusion is potent, if the learner really wants to overcome the confusion.

(c) Extended Responses:
Transcripts reveal that independent of Roger Brown, Ruth Weir and many other experts on language acquisition, Mrs Bell learnt from her experience as a mother with her first child, the subtleties of the complex linguistic dance which goes on between the learning child and adults. She realized for herself the power of the extended response which gives learners rich data upon which to base new forays into the world through language. Having deeply internalized this understanding, she operates on this with great patience, skill and empathy with her fifteen year old students.

(d) Performance and Production
She knows that skills are learnt and consolidated through application in tasks which have consequences.

She also knows that the intention to perform or produce unlocks tacit powers (to use Polanyi's term)

(e) Answering Questions:
Just as demonstration is important so is question answering at the point of confusion. Mrs Bell deliberately experiments in this sequence of work with allowing them to experience confusion and to make mistakes. This is the mark of a confident and established theoretician. She knows that this will lead to her being commissioned to teach:
"I set out to be even bolder in letting the kinds take the wrong direction. I stood back more and let the questions come....."

(f) Transformation:
Mrs Bell has not read Jerome Bruner on the theory of transformation (that each time we transform present understandings from one medium to another we increase our present understandings) and yet she knows the theory.

The students read the novel. They then talk about the novel, through the medium of poetry. They then transform what they know into drama and into illustrations and posters. They write scripts and they read scripts. The series of transformations intensifies the learning. Mrs Bell is quite deliberate in her planning for this to occur.

(g) Intention/Negotiation:
Mrs Bell has evolved over many years a very clear stance on the power of student intention as opposed to teacher coercion. She admits that she could have forced the class to be more superficially efficient in getting through the work. She could also have imposed a tighter, less-negotiable structure. Instead she provided firm parameters within which she negotiated groupings, task allocations, and the form and content of assignments. She kept

throwing the responsibility of choice and time management back onto the class. The result was a sequence where the class was slow to begin and floundering for a week or so. Gradually, as intentions and ownership took hold, the momentum gathered until in many ways the class took over. Her theories about withholding are linked with her strategies for empowerment. She has a very subtle understanding of the de-powering effects of premature instruction and direction.

An examination of Mrs Bell's composing shows that in this sequence she also deliberately thinks aloud for students (linked with her theory of empowerment), that she insists on student self-evaluation for the same reason, and that she consistently requires prediction both about the outcomes of the novel and about the emerging shape of the unit of work.

As a scientist/teacher she is experimenting on a number of fronts in this sequence of work. Perhaps the most interesting exploration is her attempt to give them insight into her curriculum construction and to teach them how to construct their own curriculum. The sub-text of this curriculum story deals with what it is to be a teacher and a learner. As an experimenter, Mrs Bell is constantly construing and reconstruing in the light of her observations about what happens.

3. Technician/Designer

In her pre-teaching monologues, Mrs Bell is somewhat like a painter before a blank canvas, looking at what she wishes to paint; using figurative hands to frame it in various ways in her mind and contemplating how to place it on the canvas. But this is a too static depiction of what she does. Her canvas is one which, she knows, will continually re-cast itself of its own volition. In designing her unit, she knows that she must take into account the counter-designs of the students. There is artistry in her imagining but the excitement of the vision is shaped and constrained by a wide range of

technical and practical considerations.

Mrs Bell has to take into account the nature of the classrooms, the availability of resources and materials, the time available (including the intervention of Sports Day and Easter), the school's assessment and reporting requirements and the present capabilities of the class.

She has to consider questions of sequence, balance, and pace.

Implicit in any art or science is technology and skill in the manipulation of media. Mrs Bell deploys oral, written, dramatic and visual media in a subtle blend to give colour, variety and changing tensions to her creation.

4. Knower/Believer

What does Mrs Bell know in order to practise her art and science in this sequence of work. An inadequate shopping list will give some idea. She knows about:

- Australian literature, Ruth Park as a novelist, and about this novel in particular
- Australian history as it affects this novel
- a range of poetry dealing with adolescent emotions similar to those in the novel
- the various levels of work that might be expected of her 15 year old students
- the eventual requirements of examiners in English in terms of what constitutes a good literary/critical essay
- the kind of diet that the class has had in the past and will have in the future
- the rationale of process writing.

To such knowledge, combined with her theories, she brings strong beliefs, the product of her particular socialization. She believes:

- that her job is to extend horizons so that students can move beyond their present world view

- that teachers should "come clean" on as many levels as possible
- that students' questions should be treated seriously
- that schools generally are repressive, secretive and confining
- self-esteem is the cornerstone of learning
- too many English teachers do not teach that which they hope students will learn
- that society should be based on sharing and collaboration.

Both art and science advance through theory from a base of knowledge under the direction of beliefs.

5. Controller/Shaper/Sculptor

Let us not be romantic. Mrs Bell is in control. She has to be. What we have not observed closely is the superb peripheral vision that allows her to move around the classroom settling pockets of unrest, unsettling ghettoes of idleness and provoking those who are sitting on their assets. There is a weaponry of gentle inquiry and reminder which she brings to this task. Most of the time she is one step ahead. She knows that Joseph, Glen and Michael are talking motor-bikes rather than inner conflict. They think they are getting away with it. She knows that there is value in the talk and allows it to develop a productive head of steam. She then delicately intervenes to re-direct the energy towards the formal task.

One way to look at what happens is to see it as a kind of physics of the classroom in which the law of conservation of energy operates, except that classrooms leak. Without vigilance, entropy will occur; the class resolve will wind down. Mrs Bell is an anti-entropic agent redirecting and focussing energy. She also feeds energy by contributing her knowledge and ideas.

I had also thought to use the analogy of teacher as sculptor but clearly this is to deny the co-sculpting of students. In fact, we see Mrs Bell early in the piece

sculpting while the students are reluctant helpers or voyeurs. Then gradually the students take the basic clay shape and push it in directions unforeseen. At the end Mrs Bell is admiring their work.

6. Coach, Demonstrator, Teacher

Mrs Bell works with great commitment on an apprenticeship model. She deplores the way in which some of her colleagues expect students to pick up competencies by themselves. (The kind of teacher who puts encouraging or discouraging remarks on essays but never shows how to write an essay.)

She believes that it is her job to teach, to show, to explain. The students recognize and appreciate this. They know that they are going deep and that Mrs Bell will help them when they are lost.

Mrs Bell's talent lies in that subtle apprehension of when to tell and when to remain silent. She gets her cues from the students. When they genuinely ask, she teaches her heart out. If they don't ask and she feels strongly that they need her teaching and don't know it, she will impose herself but only if she judges that the students are confused and will therefore pay attention to her demonstration. She must be assured that retrospectively they will appreciate what she has done.

In this sequence of work, she takes aside a small group to instruct them on how to read a poem, extract its themes and relate these to the novel. She does this by giving a very generous window on herself at work. She thinks for them, writes for them and comments in detail on why and how she does it.

She is a coach who can do it. She is an empress who wears clothes!

7. Metaphysicist/Illuminator/Commentator

Mrs Bell knows and shares my own interest in experimenting with teaching students to become theorizers about the

teaching of their teachers and about their own learning. The slogan I use is "making the information and the theory available to the students".

If teachers are deliberate teachers, consciously operating on principles and clearly aware of why they use certain strategies to serve their intentions, then they can,if they wish, tell all of this to their students and invite them to see if it works. In this way, teachers can enlist the aid of students as laboratory assistants in the ongoing experiment.

We observe Mr. Bell explaining repetitiously why she is doing certain things, how she sees it working and what she thinks will be the benefits to them.

My recording of the students' comments show that early in the sequence they simply do not listen to this. Her explanatory spiels are treated almost like the opening credits for a film. Or perhaps more accurately, because schools generally do not require students to know why they are doing what they do, the explanations and the philosophizing go unregarded as a kind of noise or insignificant foreplay.

Significantly, later in the sequence the teacher's persistence is paying off. Students can not only indicate in detail what is happening and why. They have clear goals that they are deliberately trying to reach. They can also comment on the learning advantages and disadvantages of group work and performance.

I am reminded of the story of the interns who met each week with specialists to examine x-ray prints. At first the bewildered interns watched without comprehension as the specialists discussed shadows the learners could not see. Eventually, they came to see what the specialists saw.

8. Politician/Battler

Behind the scenes of this teaching set, the politics of the school and the education system are fought out.

Mrs Bell in many ways teaches against the grain of the school and, sadly, of the English faculty itself.

Allowing group work and a degree of student decision making is considered at least a mild form of insanity. Noise is the first sign of the dreaded disease "lack of control". People whisper pityingly behind hands about the unfortunates who cannot keep their classes quiet.

Mrs Bell has had painful crises of nerve when all the overt and covert signals of the school have said "Go back, you're going the wrong way". But, armed with her theory and her implacable desire to be congruent with her beliefs, she has persevered. Her greatest allies are her students and the parents of her students who know her commitment, her dedication and her record of delivering what she promises.

Her main protection is her articulate theory of education. With faculty heads, the school principal or outside questioners, she is strong in knowing why she teaches as she does. Opposition tends to wilt if it argues from dogma and entrenchment rather than from rationality and understanding.

Mrs Bell has won room to move but it has taken her ten years. Recently she has become better at recruiting allies on the staff.

9. Provider/Servant

We have already discussed Mrs Bell as formal demonstrator and question answerer. Her role as giver goes deeper than the more overt manifestations.

Between lessons she searches for books on early Sydney, finds and provides additional poetry anthologies, puts students in touch with extension novels and writes copious responses on written offerings.

This is a servant role, largely unappreciated by the

students. If students are to get on with the work, teachers must re-cast their role. For instance, because time was short at the end of the sequence, Mrs Bell sensibly became an executive officer for the class committee:

"We heard from each group, quickly, and then I undertook the task to write that up into a summary, which I will photocopy and give back to them."

10. Connoisseur/Reflector/Critic

Mrs Bell's pre-teaching monologue, the reflections during the sequence and her retrospective comments, show clearly the role of the English teacher as savourer and mixer.

This is the teacher as gourmet, checking for the right mix, testing effect and affect, worrying about unpalatable diversions and taking pleasure in things coming out well.

Hers is an artistic focus. Keeping her sights on the desired finished unit, she zooms in to sample what Brenton is doing, or stands back to contemplate the total dynamics of the group or class. Knowing that the class cannot help her to achieve the proper aesthetic blend if they are unaware of her criteria for valuing, she tells them as a reflective critic what she is making of their work and how she feels about the quality of their involvement and their products.

Her lessons are packed with valuing, almost always positive but with suggestions and prompts:

"You could perhaps take one more step ....."

"If you wanted to improve it, maybe you could ...."

Mrs Bell is not coy about her role as judge but her judgement is always in the direction of making her students better judges. To this end, she makes her criteria explicit and does not get into the trickery and sadism we sometimes find in schools where teachers keep

the password secret.

Behind her connoisseurship, is a theory of empowerment. Miss Jean Brodie has no place in her scheme of things.

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CONCLUSION

Putting this all back together again, we are left with the teacher as artist. Her art is to deploy all these roles, and more, flexibly and simultaneously, sometimes with one thing in the front of her consciousness but always with the tonal background of every other item in her repertoire.

She is poly-attentive. With one part of her mind's-eye on the imagined outcomes, she must read with feeling and sensitivity from the novel, while sensing whether she has engaged the class, knowing how much time she has left and remaining ready to break off for explanation at any time according to a judgement of whether this is necessary or whether it would intrude on the spell of the story. In James Britton's terms she must have both a global and a piecemeal awareness of what is happening. The technician, the scientist and the artist work together.

Frustrating as it may be for teacher educators, I doubt whether we can teach the "feel" that Mrs Bell has learnt. We can only create the conditions and promote the frame of mind that will allow it to come. I have only been able to construct some fairly crude signposts which point roughly in the direction of that "feel".

When we ask contemporary artists to explain, themselves, they refer us back to their work. They are reluctant to translate their effort into words.
"If I could tell you what it meant," said Isodora Duncan, "there would be no point in dancing it."

In the end, I cannot translate Mrs Bell for you. As Frost says

"Poetry is what is lost in the translation."

Perhaps we can illuminate Mrs Bell's work by noting the difference between synchronized music played by musicians obedient to a strict conductor, and music interweaving rhythm patterns played by improvisors, with their own downbeats.

Certain African musicians carry on five simultaneous rhythms, the melody and four percussion parts. Three rhythms are common in pre-literate music: melody, handclapping and tapping the feet; the individual performs all three simultaneously; though not in synchronization.*

I suspect that something pre-literate, passionate and primitive pulses behind the civilized surfaces of Mrs Bell's teaching. Analogies with dance, music and sculpture help us to get closer to what she does. But they are inadequate. It is left for me simply to celebrate her achievement.

I hope that we will all recognize in Mrs Bell the wonder of ourselves. I challenge us all to continue to learn as much as possible about the loom and to weave with imagination.

Footnote

* This section is taken with alterations from They Came What They Beheld, Edmund Carpenter, Outerbridge and Dienstfrey, New York, 1970.